

Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP)

Report of the TEP Steering Group to the meeting of the Trade and Economic Ministers at the EU-US summit, Washington, 17 December 1999

The Steering Group met on 10 December 1999.

As regards multilateral issues, following the Ministerial Conference in Seattle, we took stock of the situation in view of the EU-US summit.

As regards bilateral issues, we underlined the need to make rapid progress on the implementation of the Action Plan and identified the following priority areas.

In the field of **technical barriers to trade** we have addressed the full range of identified sectoral and cross-cutting regulatory issues and established next steps for regulatory co-operation. We expect to announce agreement on guidelines/principles for effective regulatory co-operation and more transparent regulatory procedures by mid-2000. We will aim at completing negotiations on an agreement on marine safety equipment by the mid-2000 EU-U.S. Summit. We will complete preparatory work on road safety equipment with a view to adding the sector to the EU-U.S. Mutual recognition agreement (MRA). We will develop a joint action plan by early 2000 on calibration to support the MRA. Based on the agreed work plan on cosmetics, we will establish specific timeframes and goals in terms of promoting public health and trade facilitation. We will redouble efforts to establish a dialogue on possible regulatory co-operation on elevators. We will initiate a structured dialogue to address proposed regulatory changes for telecommunications products in our respective systems.

As far as regards **services** we have reached agreement to open negotiations on the first mutual recognition agreements in the service sector, for insurance, architecture and engineering services. It is likely that significant trade facilitation with resulting economic benefits will arise from agreement in these three economically important sectors. We will start our discussions early in 2000 with a view to defining the objectives to be achieved within these three sectors. Once the objectives are defined, we will quickly move to negotiating the sectoral mutual recognition agreements with a view to finalising them as soon as possible and involving, as appropriate, the regulatory and professional associations concerned.

We will redouble our efforts to implement the TEP Action Plan objectives in the intellectual property rights, environment, labour, procurement and food safety areas, as potential gains from progress in these areas could be significant.

As regards **competition**, we have agreed to set up a working group on intensified transatlantic anti-trust cooperation, in the field of merger control. The working group will focus on the scope for further convergence of analysis/methodology in merger cases being treated in both jurisdictions, an in-depth study of our respective approaches to the identification and implementation of remedies

and to post-merger compliance-monitoring, the objective being to identify “best practices.” We expect the working group to begin examining these issues early in the new year.

On **biotechnology**, we have started the first phase of the pilot project with a workshop which took place on 19-21 October in Luxembourg. It is intended that the first phase will be completed during the first few months of next year. We hope to be able to launch phase two as soon as possible. Following the initiative on biotechnology taken recently by Presidents Prodi and Clinton, the group's work on various issues in this field will be intensified.

Early warning/prevention of trade frictions: We have consulted closely, in accordance with the principles and mechanisms for early warning and problem prevention adopted at the US-EU Summit in Bonn, on a number of specific issues that have the potential to adversely affect the broader transatlantic relationship.

Finally, the SG agreed that in order to achieve results before the next summit on the implementation of the Action Plan but in particular on the above identified priority areas, additional efforts will be necessary. For this purpose, the SG will hold its next meeting before the end of March 2000.